

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 11 July 2013.

PRESENT

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mr. D. Jennings CC
Mrs. H. E. Loydall CC
Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC

Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

1. Election of Chairman.

It was noted that the nomination of Mr Rhodes had been reported at the Annual meeting of the County Council on 15 May.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC be appointed Chairman of the Employment Committee until the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2014.

Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC – in the Chair

2. Appointment of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. R. Shepherd CC be appointed Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2014.

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2013 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

5. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Mrs H. Loydall declared a personal interest in item 13, 'Review of Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Time', as a member of a Teachers Union (minute 13 refers).

8. Leading for High Performance - Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the outcome of stage 2 of the Leading for High Performance (LfHP) for managers programme and on further development of the approach to leadership for manager's grade 15 and above. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The focus of the programme going forward would be on developing and maintaining trust, leading with emotional intelligence, negotiated leadership and leading people through change. To ensure high levels of performance, managers needed the skills to be able to read difficult situations and adapt to rapidly changing environments.
- Managers needed to be able to think more strategically and engage more with partners, establishing new working relationships. Ensuring that managers understood the need to work in partnership and the impact of their negotiating approach were increasingly important skills now required by all local government managers. The LfHP programme had been adapted to up-skill managers in this area.
- Understanding the role of members and the dynamics of the relationship between members and managers had been built into the wider Learning and Development programme. A new half day political awareness course had been established which would be particularly important for those that did not come into contact with members very often.
- Attendance on the LfHP programme did not automatically enable managers to move up to the next salary grade. However, the programme provided them with a range of skills that amongst other aims should enhance their opportunities to progress in the future.
- At an individual level, outcomes would be measured through the PDR process both annually and through six monthly reviews. It had been identified that the management performance framework was outdated and assessment of performance would now be against management competences leading to outcomes being measured more effectively.
- There was a concern expressed that officers were often promoted as experts in their field but they did not always have a professional management qualification. The County Council offered various training courses to first line, middle and senior managers, some of which provided national accredited awards. However, such training was needs assessed i.e. was not undertaken automatically by all managers, as this would not be cost effective.

RESOLVED:

That the continuation of Leading for High Performance programme be supported.

9. Internships.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to seek agreement on the principles of developing internships within the County Council. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- The 4 to 6 week time period seemed ambitious in terms of interns gaining sufficient experience. However, this was necessary to distinguish internships from other work placements and to ensure the interns were not used to complete the work of a paid employee. It would be necessary to assess over time whether or not the timescale allocated would be sufficient to provide the level of professional experience intended by the programme.
- It would be important to obtain feedback from the interns themselves to assess the effectiveness and value of the programme from their perspective. Such feedback would be fed into the proposed review in six and twelve months' time.
- As part of the review, consideration would need to be given to any evidence that internships had impacted on the apprenticeship programme, though this was thought to be unlikely.
- Managerial capacity might be an issue as the programme placed expectations on managers to fulfil the preparation requirements and to manage and support each intern.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That support be given to the development of an Internship framework and programme using the principles outlined in this report which are underpinned by the Common Best Practice for High Quality Internships;
- (b) That a review of internships be carried out in six and twelve months' time and reports on the outcome of these reviews be submitted to this Committee;
- (c) That the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to seek feedback from each of the young people involved in the Internship programme in order to obtain their views on its effectiveness and areas where it might be improved.

10. Talent Management Pilot Scheme.

The Committee considered a report, the purpose of which was to share the development of a pilot talent management scheme within the Council. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted that a high degree of commitment would be required from those involved in the pilot scheme. However, the scheme would identify at an individual level what each employee on the pilot would need in terms of development and so benefited those involved, as well as the Council, by working to improve individual performance.

The Committee further noted that there would not be any automatic promotion available to those taking part in the scheme, but the tailored development of individual staff and

managers would mean they would be well placed to progress as and when opportunities became available.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the pilot of the talent management scheme to be called 'Aspire' be supported;
- (b) That a review of the pilot be undertaken in six and twelve months' time and the outcome of these reviews reported to this Committee.

11. Apprenticeship Scheme for Children in Care.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and young People's Service, the purpose of which was seek support for the development of an apprenticeship scheme for children in care at Leicestershire County Council. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted that the scheme would operate as part of the wider apprenticeship scheme providing the same level of qualifications and following the same application process. However, appropriate additional support would be provided to individual young people in the scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the development of a pilot Apprenticeship Scheme for Young People in Care and leaving care be supported with a view to developing a sustainable approach in line with the Council's Corporate Parenting Responsibilities and Pledge.

12. Sickness Absence - Quarter 4 Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the overall County Council and departmental performance in relation to sickness absence for the financial year 2012/13 (1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013). A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The report covered the period up to 31st March 2013. However, a new system had been introduced from April 2013 which would now require managers, except in very limited circumstances, to input the reasons for a person's absence. Occasionally, staff did not initially give reasons for their absence which meant a small number of 'not known' responses could still be inserted onto the system. This could, however, be rectified and updated later when more information became available.
- The management of attendance needed to be given greater focus and HR would be working with managers to emphasise this.
- The number of stress related illnesses recorded had fallen. However, it was acknowledged that, for a number of reasons, staff might be reluctant to report their illness as stress related and the figures might not therefore reflect the true position. Significant work had been undertaken concerning the management of stress and mental health through the wellbeing agenda and it was acknowledged that stress related absence was caused by a wide range of factors not necessarily work related.

- Concern was expressed about the quality of the data contained within the report. Some considered that it was difficult to identify ways to address staff sickness levels if the data made available was unreliable and therefore potentially misleading. The Committee noted that work was already underway to address this.
- The Committee had agreed the introduction of the Wellbeing Policy and an assessment of the extent to which this was being implemented might be helpful to ensure the help and support available was being promoted by managers and utilised by staff.

The Committee agreed that further work was needed to analyse the data and determine whether or not similar organisations were experiencing similar levels of sickness absence.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the level of sickness absence levels across the Council be noted;
- (b) That further consideration be given to the level of sickness absence levels when the further work being undertaken to improve the quality of the data had been undertaken;
- (c) That the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to undertake further research and comparative work to identify the reasons for the apparent increase in sickness absence levels and how the Council compared with other similar organisations over a similar period and to present a report on the outcome of this work at the next meeting of the Committee.

13. Review of Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Time.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to report the current trade union recognition and facilities time agreement in light of recent government guidance and school funding forum decisions. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted that the proposals would mean the continued funding for full-time Unison representatives at the current level until 2014. It was acknowledged that, given the current climate and changes that would be undertaken as part of the transformation agenda, trade unions had a valuable role to play. However, the level of funding would be kept under review on an annual basis.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals set out in paragraph 20 (a) to (j) of the report be approved as a basis for negotiations with the recognised trade unions.

14. HR Approach to Management of Change - Transformation Programme.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to advise on the general approach to be adopted by HR to the significant amount of change and transformation required during the period covered by the current Medium Term Financial Strategy. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

15. Staff Survey 2012 - Action Plan Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the delivery of the action plan which addresses the issues raised in the 2012 staff survey. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted that all of the actions in the Action Plan had been RAG rated 'green' which meant these had either been implemented or were progressing within the required time scales. The results of the next survey to be conducted in 2014 would identify whether or not such actions had realised the improvements for staff as intended.

RSEOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted and a further update be provided at the Committee's next meeting.

16. Organisational Change Policy: Summary of Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to present a summary of current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress in their implementation. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

17. Date of Next Meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 23 October 2013 at 10.00am.

2.00 - 2.20 pm
11 July 2013

CHAIRMAN